

The Crooked Path

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2 Despite being forced - forced, I tell you - to travel round the world, I'm pleased to say that issue 3 is more-or-less on time!

9 One thing that all that travelling does - apart from making you appreciate being back home - is that it gives you the chance to get a taste of other cultures. I took full advantage of the opportunity to explore what it is like to craft in foreign parts, and both a podcast episode and an article in this issue record my findings.

23 In issue 4, we will be able to enjoy travel more, because we will be starting a regular Pagan Travel column, written by Grace Victoria Swann. She will be starting with a look at New Mexico.

31 We were hoping to vend at next year's PantheaCon, but the trip got in the way of submitting our application, so we won't have a booth. But we will be there, and we're hoping to have a launch party for Raven's new book, "The Wortcunner's Way", and also possibly a new book by Veronica Cummer.

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The World through Eyes of Fire

Developing the Second Sight and the Vision of the Unseen World

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For Everything That Is Seen...

People often ask me about the development of what they call “second sight”. Most people interested in esoteric pursuits, whether it be western sacred “magic” or cultural varieties of sorcery from any corner of the globe are interested in exploring whether or not the capacity of *sight* can be turned into *seeing* in the deeper sense of the word. There is, in all cultures, an understood folkloric reality of “seeing” that occupies every echelon of traditional stories regarding the mystical.

Indeed, I’ve spent a good bit of time discussing the “two sights”, and mystics from every era have reported some form of extra-ordinary seeing. I have, over time, developed the “two sights” myself, or as I prefer to call it, my “eyes of fire”, though I must say: of all the extraordinary feats I have accomplished, development of this special capacity has been the longest and the hardest.

Do not be discouraged when I use the word “hard”- I don’t mean that it took physical, tooth-grating effort. What I mean is that “sight” is a very subtle capacity that requires you to remind yourself, over and over again, that it has nothing to do with how you normally experience visual information. It is easy to forget this, because every day of our lives, we experience the world through our eyes of earth and water, and we are constantly barraged by visual stimulus. This, of course, assumes that you can see normally; the blind may actually have a leg up on this development, as they have never been trained through experience of a visual model to expect the “sight” in those terms.

The path to the “two sights” or to seership is long. I hate to have to tell this to people who are looking for a shortcut, but a lot of dedication is needed to arrive at a point where the Unseen World becomes more in focus (to use a phrase born in visual understanding). The path of development begins in something as basic as how we think about the world, and our relationship to it- and this is a great secret of the development.

A person who wishes to see in the “other” way must begin transforming their basic understanding of who and what they are in relationship to the world that they perceive as “outside” of them. This wall of perception, this fundamental division, is the first and greatest obstacle to the development of the second sight. It’s simple: most people believe that “they” are situated within a body of flesh and blood, quite distinct from the world of trees, grass, clouds, rivers, houses, and other people that they experience, spatially, as being “all around them”. This basic “situation of perception” is only one

way of experiencing one's reality, however.

It is certainly a convenient way. It is enormously helpful when we need to find food, cross the street, run from an angry bear, or any one of countless other situations. But what we gain in convenience from it, we lose in subtle experience and wisdom. It really is a trade off.

Fortunately for us, the development of the "other" seeing doesn't require us to lose this normal "way of seeing". First, we must realize on a deep level that things are not always what they appear, no matter how normalized they are, or how useful they seem. This simple wisdom- "Things are not always as they appear" is the foundational pillar that upholds the path to second sight. I have another version of this saying which I prefer, which was taught to me by spiritual contacts- "For everything that is seen, nine things are unseen." A Cabalist that I know joyfully told me that this favorite proverb of mine was quite true, on more than one level- for every *mal'kuth*-level perception, he said, there are nine other spheres unseen! I don't deal in Cabalism, but I was happy that he was able to find some relevance in my little mantra.

"For everything that is seen, nine things are unseen". This statement says much; chiefly, it reminds us that what we normally experience is only the tip of the iceberg. This is a matter of faith, you might say, for the mystic; before one can venture into a condition in which the other sight is engaged, one must trust that what he or she normally sees is only part of the story. Without such a trust, one will not find the motivation or discipline needed to walk the path of development.

Farmers of the Deep Sight

The heart of the path is this: you must break out of the "I am here and everything else is over there" mentality that has been fostered in you by virtue of your "normal" sensory experiences. This habitual mentality is fiercely and firmly entrenched in our everyday thinking, and reinforced greatly by the fact that our linguistic capacity operates on its logic. This fundamental duality of perception is created largely through language, but followed up (and re-affirmed by) sensory experience. To break out of it, and experience yourself in a new relationship to what you once called "your environment" is not something that happens overnight.

And the key to succeeding at this difficult task is not so difficult. You must become a "farmer of the sight". This agricultural metaphor is the best I've ever found; the ideas that you must accept to find the sight have to be planted in the head, daily, easily, in small seed-forms, and then be allowed to grow in your mind, until the day comes that you find yourself unconsciously and instinctively acting on them. These "seed ideas" have to be pushed down into the conscious mind, and further down into the dark layers below, and allowed to germinate there. The trust you have in the Unseen Realities beyond common empiricism will act as the water needed to feed the seeds, and have them sprout and grow into a strange, new capacity of perception.

So if this path is one you wish to walk, start with these seed ideas:

1. For everything that is seen, nine things are unseen
2. I am not “in” a world; I am this world
3. There is no division between what I call “me” and this world; that division is merely a matter of perception

Push those seeds into the mind, early in the day after you have awakened, and just before you fall asleep, and think no more on them until the next “seeding” occasion comes along. Just let them work their magic deep inside you.

The Fundamental Point

Now, while they are in the earth of your mind and growing, you have other tasks. You have the important task of “walking to and fro upon the earth” of your everyday life, and really trying to open your mind up, and accept the world, with all its countless forms, as not ultimately separate from you. For me, the path began years ago when I was a child, the day I realized (while sitting in my back yard) that “I” wasn’t some foreign being living on a planet, living out some temporary existence; this world was just as much my native world as a tree or a cat or a dog or the plants in the garden.

For so long, I had succumbed to the notion that human beings were “above” the natural order, and while plants and animals were parts of the natural environment, we humans were not.

Such an idea, so common in the minds of most people, is not only devastating to the development of mystical capacities, but also deadly to our existence. The wasteful destruction of the natural world, as well as the wanton destruction of other forms of life, is born in this “foreigner” thinking. When we “re-situate” ourselves right where we are, where we came from, and where we belong, we discover not only a powerful peace of mind, but we begin to discover some extraordinary capacities about ourselves.

One of those capacities is the ability to relate to our world and all its forms in ways that transcend the ways we typically relate to other human beings. We have other connections between what we call “ourselves” and what we call the “plants” or “animals”. We have intuitive connections, and even connections that go beyond our ability to label or intellectually understand. And those connections- truly invisible yet real threads- tie us to everything. If you were to tremble one of those threads, just one- it would affect something else, which in turn would tremble and affect other things, and this would spread out to the furthest reaches of what we call “space” and “time”. It is a touch

mind-blowing, but it is a reality; it is this connection that is the basis of communication, intuition, and even sorcery.

This connection can never be broken. Death does not break it; in fact, the web-work of subtle connections are simply the roads “walked” or glided upon by the consciousness-principle of a dead being, as they move in a new freedom into new conditions of experience. They are the “faery roads” or “trods” that sometimes line up well with the features of the landscape that we all wander upon in our daily lives.

You may wonder why I am driving this point quite literally into the ground. It is because this point is the fundamental point that contains the key to conscious mystical sight, of any kind. Until you have literally “overflowed” the boundaries of perception set by your everyday life, those boundaries that keep you trapped behind a nose and eyes, perceptually “inside” a head on top of a body, staring “out” at all the things you “see”, you cannot have access to the sight. The eyes of water and earth, comfortably situated in the skull, cannot see very far. But the eyes of fire, not situated “within” anything, can see whatever the heart can accept.

And to get to the “overflow” point takes time, for most people. For everyone, really; aside from those whom folklore gives “natural” mystic sight to, I have never met a living person who was born with the eyes of fire naturally engaged. It may be that children, not so conditioned by language and concept, wield a natural form of the fire-sight, but by early adulthood, it has gone dormant for most, a smoldering cinder buried under the ash of society’s mental and spiritual pollution.

If you believe that “second sight” must come in only your previously understood models of “visual experience”, you will never achieve it. If you believe it must come in obedience to some “dualistic” model of mind, you will never achieve it. If you think that it is impossible or too hard to achieve, you will never achieve it. It is time to break out of doubt and break out of the trap of paradigmatic programming, and reach into unknown places for power you never knew you had.

It takes time to “reprogram” yourself- but don’t be fooled into thinking that this reconditioning is primarily a consciously willed effort. It isn’t; it is partly a willed effort of conscious awareness, but mostly an unconscious development, a fundamental shift of intuitive worldview. It is a shift in the most basic, unstated assumptions that shape your entire “way of experiencing” the world.

This is why the “seeding of the deep mind” is needed, and why you must remind yourself, everyday of all that I have said, and push that constant repetition into your deepest ground of being. You must literally brainwash yourself (or should I say mindwash) into believing that you wield capacities of awareness that are not tied to the eyes and body of earth and water; you must become convinced, not just on a conscious level, but on a deeper level, that your mind, on certain levels, is far more connected to all things than you could have imagined. Your mind, on certain levels, communicates with things you cannot consciously imagine or even deal with; on other levels, your mind is involved

in wonders and mysteries beyond easy reckoning.

The Blossom and the Secret

You must, in a sense, wait for the sight to “come to you”, for the plant to grow up from the depths, and blossom in your awareness gradually. It will happen, so long as you keep the program of conditioning going. It may take years; it took years for me, and I find that many people hate to hear this fact. But the wise have long known that nothing worthwhile is free or easy.

There are two more salient points that I have to make before ending this work. The first is this: when the “other sight” begins to blossom, to open up in your awareness, you must not stop your “farming”- you must continue on, as though nothing had happened. Many stop their efforts when they get the first hints of the Unseen; this is devastating. One inch of sight may seem amazing, but hundreds of miles must be opened before you can enjoy the stable capacity that can be of use to you. Do not let early success throw you off.

The second point is deeper, but most important: understand that the “sight” I am talking about is not something that reveals visual images to you, as you normally understand them. It is a mystical experience I am talking about, not a visionary state in which you see invisible people or beings as literally as you see “ordinary” people or beings. The second sight is not the ability to see “light” or “auras” glowing around people or places; such descriptions of sight are couched in visual terminology, and they have a way of deceiving people.

The trouble with the sight is that when a sighted person must report what they have seen, they have no choice but to use visual metaphors, at least in most cases. You must bear in mind the gap between experience and the metaphors used to communicate experience, and don’t let yourself be fooled. Wait with patience for the purity of the experience that I am describing, and with discipline and devotion to effort, you will not be disappointed.

There is a final secret I’ll discuss here, now. Don’t worry about secrets; as a gentleman in Ireland once told me, the best way to keep secrets is to tell them to everyone, and make them as obvious as you can. Plain sight is the best hiding place, because the eyes of the unwise seldom see the plainest things. And even if they did see the secret, they’d assume (wrongly) that they then understood it or possessed it- forgetting that for everything that is seen, nine things remain hidden.

The secret deals with poetry. Poetry, since ancient times a sacred capacity, refers to more than just rhyming couplets or love poems; it refers to the fire of creativity, exploding out of a heart wrapped in its flames, and appearing in the shape of words. Those words give us keys or invitations to enter into a frame of mind that was (hopefully) in some way similar to the poet’s inspiration, but it doesn’t always work. True poems seem to

be like invitations from the Otherworld, sent into this world through the minds and lips of the inspired, but only intended for a select audience. Many will hear, but few will understand or be transported to a different place.

When the true sight opens up in a human being, that person has no choice but to enter the realm of poetry. This is because the “Eyes of Fire” and the fire of inspiration are the same fire. There’s the secret; poetry and seership are not just cousins; they are twin brothers. When you engage the “other sight”, you are engaging a landscape of inspiration. You don’t “see” like the eyes of earth and water see; you “see” something mysterious, something that swims into your mind with words and understandings, but before it was words and understandings, it was something that I simply cannot write about. It is there; its immensity and power is indisputable and unmistakable; and the experience of it is bliss; but the “first half” of the experience is impossible to describe, only the “second half”, the half expressed in metaphor, can be described.

The Oak King Sits Upon the Gate Below

I shall try my best to give an example. This very day, I sat before my hearth and slid into an “overflow” by using the Hissing of the Serpent- a powerful technique that I have written about extensively in many other places. In that long, endless hiss, the awareness “phases out” of the perceptual trap of body and floods into the great fullness of things; in that fullness, the familiar spirits that serve a sorcerer can be called with simple ease. This is because your call echoes into every corner of reality. If you wish to think spatially, your call echoes into the furthest and most distant reaches of the worlds above, here, and below. If you wish to think from another angle, your call actually becomes what all things are.

Either way, if you are identified with a familiar, it has no choice but to “arise” into your new awareness-experience. Did you call it from a distance, or did you simply awaken the awareness that is whole, and so always aware of the familiar? Either way, the attentions of that allied power are upon you, and at this point, I can feel it coming from “deep below”, and entering my chest and head.

A simple request for the Eyes of Fire to open is easy at this point; the familiar can affect this change. I experienced my own home in that extraordinary way, and I saw two things inside, and two things outside. Bear in mind that what I “saw” can only be described in terms of words, limited words which are all I or any other human has to use. The paradox is powerful: It wasn’t this, and yet, it was. Inside, I could see that my hearth radiated some strange power at its center, the place where so many offerings had been made, and so many fires lit to create doorways into the unseen world.

Also, I saw perhaps fifteen or twenty tongues of what looked like solid fire flames floating near the ceiling, above the hearth. My familiar told me that these were powers

attracted by my work over the years. Actual spirits taking a form to my inner sight! It was quite exciting, as I had never seen them there before. I realized that my home didn't have a single spiritual entity acting as the "house spirit" that I have worked to contact and propitiate; it was a choir of several powers. Some were from this place; others were literally followers of my spiritual work, answerers to my calls throughout the years, who were attached to me, now.

Outside, I saw the powers (very stately, to my vision) of the oak trees and Dutch elms that line my street; I could sense their vast lives and intelligence sitting there, observing the world in a deep way that only they can. Above some of the trees was a trod, a pathway unseen, stretching from whence to where I have no idea. It's mystery was translated by my own mind, (and by my words now) as a golden strip of light. Two more things caught my inner attentions: the fact that the spirits of the large hedge of holly bushes to the right of my door were watching me intently (no surprise, as I make offerings to them and contact them in trance often) and I could feel how protective they were of my home. Thorns are always protective, when arrayed around a home, but these immense bushes were even more so, bolstered by my months of work here.

The spirit of the oak tree nearest to my door was the most vibrant thing I encountered; I could literally see it "squatting" on top of an entrance to the Underworld, created by its large root system. It was guarding it! I had never sensed this entrance before, even though I intuitively knew that large root-systems make such entrances.

Beyond all these things, one final vision came to me, a powerful sense, feeling and direct sight of the immensity of the Underworld. I could feel the vast chasm of darkness that is under the feet of all human beings, and under the roots of every tree. The crust of our planet is just the thinnest of coverings for the vastness of the dark space below, which is the source of things, and the concealer of all mysteries, personal or transpersonal. How majestic! How it destroys our sense of the ordinary, and endows all things with a timeless presence, and the promise of magic!

But remember, in the grip of sight, what is "personal" and what is "transpersonal"? Therein lies the key, which I hope that you will have received from reading this account.



Blood Rites

An excerpt from a private publication

By Peter Paddon

The Nature of Blood

Blood is interesting stuff. It fills our bodies, keeps us alive, and is used in poetry to describe many emotional states. Most of us spent time at school, looking at our own blood through microscopes, and learning about oxygenation, red and white cells, platelets, and so on. But what do we really know about blood?

Perhaps the most important thing to know about blood is that it is, more or less, sea water. Take away those red and white cells, the platelets, and the chemicals and hormones that get passed around the body, and what is left is basically purified sea water, nothing more, nothing less. This makes it an excellent transmitter of energy, and under the right circumstances, it can be made to store and generate energy too.

Esoterically speaking, blood is the carrier of Life Force, also known as prana, and this is part of what makes it so useful in Crafting. It is used in several ways:

CHARGING

The energy in the drop of blood placed on a talisman acts like a spiritual battery, charging the talisman with energy to do its thing. This is probably the one form of blood work you will still find being talked about.

TAGGING

For talismans or working tools, a drop of blood is an excellent way of linking them with the Crafter. The imprint of the Crafter's personality and aura that is in the blood is very potent. This is why talismans should be blooded with the blood of the person the talisman is for, not the person who made the talisman.

LIFE-GIVING

Blooding a statue, skull, cauldron or stang is a good way to give it life-force, to "breathe life" into it.

It is probably significant that if a Tradition makes use of no other body fluids, they will most likely use blood in some way. Unfortunately there are groups who decide to go the Vampiric route, but on the whole, many groups and Trads use blood as a consecration. The important thing to remember is that Crafting is about practicality, and the blooding of ritual items can be quantified.

Blood does have an advantage over the other fluids, because people are less likely to be

grossed out by their own or someone else's blood – in small quantities, anyway.

Blooding the Stone

Quite a few of the British Traditions make use of a hearth stone, and the Path I follow is one of these. The Hearth is the heart of the Coven, and it represents the very foundation of the Lore, Mythos and Praxis of the Tradition. In many ways, it acts as a manifest piece of the Sacred Land, the mythic landscape within which dwell the Gods, ancestors and other entities of the Current. In the Path I follow, when we make or renew our vows to ourselves, our Gods, and the Coven, we blood the stone to represent our tie – literally, our bloodline. There is a chant that is in common use within the wider Pagan community that pretty much sums the whole thing up nicely:

Gather round the ancient stone
Hand in hand, no more alone
For we've heard the Old Ones call –
Of one family are we all!

Gather round, lost is found,
As one family are we bound;
Bound by blood, bound by bone,
Bound around the ancient stone...

This blooding of the hearth stone or altar stone is something that humans have done in one form or another since we climbed down from the trees. Sometimes, in some cultures, it was done with the blood of enemies. But there is no sacrifice greater than the one freely given, and this sacrifice we make – literally a “making sacred” – both honors and strengthens the Ancestors and the Coven.

Consecration of tools and Talismans

Traditionally a talisman is charged with a drop of the magician's blood. This simple task is often left out of modern books on the subject, but it is an important step, that makes a vast difference to the effectiveness of the talisman. It is important to stress, though, that the blood should be from the person for whom the talisman is intended, so if the magician is working on behalf of another, the client should provide the drop of blood.

In Traditional Witchcraft, several Traditions have the practice of blooding a coin to use in crafting. Whether it is the coin used by the Magister to “purchase” the ritual space, or the coin used to pay the Ferryman, or a coin thrown in a well or a fountain, the addition of a drop of blood empowers the coin and tags it with the identity of the one crafting with it.

The Path I follow uses blood on a coin on several specific occasions. At Samhain, we

place bloody coins in the pockets of Jack, the effigy we burn as Sacred King to lead the souls of the recently deceased into the summer Lands. Each coin is cursed with something we wish to leave behind as we move into the new year, and Jack takes them – and their curse – to a place from which nothing may return unless it is reborn as something new. We sacrifice a little piece of our life force to ensure that out of the bad thing we discard, something good comes in due course.

We will also throw three bloody coins into a well to perform a Blessing, a Cursing and a Cunning – a threefold crafting that folds the coin paid (literally) for the crafting into the work itself, so it becomes self-perpetuating. The crafting is usually carefully worded so that all three components reinforce each other, and perhaps the simplest example is:

May my blessing be that I walk my Path fully and truly;
May my curse be that I walk my Path fully and truly;
May my cunning be that I walk my Path fully and truly.

Other items that might be similarly blooded as part of a crafting are stones, feathers, bones and cords for cord magick.

Blooding the Cord

Not all British Traditions use a cord or cingulam, but for those that do, it has a very special significance. In the Path that I follow, the cord represents the Tradition, the Coven, the lineage and the initiate's connection to them. The Guardian or Man in Black can use the cord to grasp a covener who has “slipped away” between the worlds and bring them back to where they are meant to be, and at Lammas we literally hang on the tree by our cords, cable-tows around our necks.

At initiation, the Magister and Mistress will blood the cord of the new initiate, to seal the promises made. In my Path, the promises are made to teach and guide the initiate to the best of our ability, to help them find their true Path, wherever it may be, and to accept them fully to our hearth and hearts. Other Traditions have other promises, and possibly other symbolism too, but this is how we do it. The initiate also bloods the cord at that time, sealing their own promise to their Gods and their Ancestors to do their best to follow their Path, wherever it may lead them.

Skrying with Blood

There is a technique that is done in some Traditions, of skrying in blood. Now this sounds like it could be heading in the direction of the “blood of our enemies” crowd, but I promise you it is much more prosaic than that. The account given here is a modern version, that takes into account modern concerns for health, hygiene, and practicality.

It is useful to have someone experienced at drawing blood, and able to obtain the

necessary materials – blood sample tubes (with anticoagulant coating), syringes, needles, alcohol swabs and bandaids. The blood-take draws a sample from each person (observing protocols for blood-borne pathogens), which is placed in a sample tube and given to the person. If the tubes do not contain anti-coagulant, each person will have to agitate or shake their tube to prevent clotting. At the appointed time in the working, wax is splattered onto a plate, then each person pours their blood from the sample tube onto the plate, and everyone skrys in the blood, looking for symbols (like tea-leaf reading) or skrying directly in the liquid, like with a bowl of ink or a crystal ball. This can be very effective for use in a group.

Another alternative, useful for solo work or if nobody has experience drawing blood, is to prick a finger with a lancet, and let a few drops of blood drip into a small bowl of water, which is then used to skry.

Menstrual Blood

There is a lot of history where Witchcraft and menstrual blood are concerned. Menstrual blood is a uniquely female product, and has been used over the ages in various forms of love, fertility and revenge crafting, especially in the Voudoun, Hoodoo and other traditions with an African or Latin American influence. But there are traditional uses in British crafting too.

When a woman wants to dedicate a cauldron to the Goddess, or to prepare one for crafting use, it is traditional to wipe menstrual blood inside it, and along the rim. This is done in a trance state, almost dreamlike, and is often accompanied by spontaneous humming, chanting or singing. The wiping motion itself is often quite sensual in nature.

Another traditional use for menstrual blood is in the creation of a Witches' Bottle – in fact, this is the only kind of blood that should be used in a Witches' Bottle. The idea here is to divert negative energies, bad luck or curses into the bottle, where it is trapped by the pins, broken glass and tangled thread sealed inside. The urine or menstrual blood are here considered “waste products” with no life of their own, but enough of a DNA signal to act as a decoy. The bottle – or bottles – is buried on the perimeter of your property, so that any curse, etc., will find the bottle before it finds you.

Another use for menstrual blood is in the rite that I was taught under the title “the Rite of the Magdelene”. Despite its biblical-sounding name, it is most definitely not a part of the average Christian's practice, but rather a potent and powerful rite of empowerment. But we will discuss this rite later.



The Castle Tradition's Rite of Harvest Home

by R.J. Thomson

What follows is a ritualized variation of the custom of Crying the Neck, for use in agrarian traditions. It is best to be performed at the end of a coven/farm's harvest. The crop should be a cereal crop of some variety. This is the way that my coven practices. Note that this particular ritual was performed in a year when the crop was ill. The practitioner should substitute different wording in the year of a bountiful crop, but the sacrifice of John Barleycorn and the petition to the nearest river/stream goddess should be made in either

The Rite of Harvest Home (Year of An Ill Crop)

Crying the Neck, the cutting of the last sheaf

Magister steps forward:

Behold, the last sheaf yet stands in the fields. To cut it is to be as the Living and Dying God, John Barleycorn. Who here will be able to take up His mantle? Who shall be the our Harvest Lord or Queen?

Dame steps forward:

Follow us, now, to the Last Sheaf and prove your worth!

All follow and stand at a designated spot, all save for the Magister and Dame throw a sickle at the "Last Sheaf." The one who "cuts" it down becomes the Harvest Lord or Harvest Queen, and so becomes the sacrifice. The one who "cuts" the "Last Sheaf" takes it in hand binds it in ribbon then raises it aloft and cries:

I have one!

Congregation:

What have ye?

Cutter:

A neck!

Congregation:

Hurrah, Hurrah, Hurrah!

Cutter:

The Corn Maiden is well shorn,
Bless the day that I was born,
I have ploughed, I have sowed,
I have reaped, I have mowed,
Hurrah, Harvest Home!

At this the Magister points his finger at the Lord/Queen and says:

You have proven your worth this day. You alone have the right to be the Lord/Queen of the Harvest. Yet, the crop has been ill. You have cut the navel-string from the Mother to the corn. Now it is you that embody the Corn Spirit and so your blood shall be spilt to ensure the well being of next year's crop.

Some time following the final harvest, the ritual is performed ---

The Compass Round is Drawn as normal

Invocation of the Corn Mother

Magister steps forward and rings the bell to the north:

Corn Mother
I invoke You with words of worship,
Leftwards I say them,
I call to You to rise here and bear witness to our art
Come now, upon this harvest home,
Your fields are reaped and
The fruits of your womb are harvested, gratefully,
I call upon you
By oath and pact, by blood and Fate, to You
Come hither and bear witness to our art!

The Burning of the Wicker Man, the Sacrifice of John Barleycorn

All step to the Wicker Man and the Harvest Lord/Queen before it. The Lord/Queen of the Harvest steps before the effigy and petitions it:

Let the Gods not take me this day,
Let instead the Corn Spirit pass into you,
Let not Fate take me into the Lands Below,
Let me not become as the Pale Folk,
Let instead this effigy take my stead,
That my blood might not flow this day,
Yet let the crops grow and the people prosper,
This I ask of you, in the name of all that is Holy.

The Dame steps forward and says:

Let it be so, as it was of old. Let the Corn Spirit pass into this creature of wood and corn, and let it go to the Land, that we might live.

The Wicker Man is lit on fire and the people dance about it until it is done burning. It goes without saying that song and drumming might accompany this. The Housle shall be performed following the burning of the Wicker Man.

A Housle or Sacrament of Bread and Wine is here performed

The Ending Declaration:

The Rites of Harvest Home have ended,
Go now, with the blessing of the Corn Mother
And bound to the Horned Master.
The bountiful crop has come in,
Now is the feast time!

All leave the compass as normal and a harvest feast is to ensue.

After the ritual, the neck is fashioned into a corn dolly of sorts. This dolly is taken to the nearest river and offered to the local river goddess, that she might bless crop of the following year with her abundant fertility.



herbal lore

by Radomir Ristic

This summer I spent my holiday in a mountain spa at “Sokobanja” (Hawk spa) in east Serbia. This was not my first visit, so I already knew that this spa is a center of trade for all kinds of plants. People purchase plants for their pharmaceutical companies from the local harvest gatherers, while others buy medicine mixtures from local herbalists, for their healing teas, and others again, for ointments, potions, tonics etc...

A small number of people know that Sokobanja is also a center of trade for all kinds of magic and sacred plants too. This kind of trading can be conducted with some of the regular herbalists or with local witches.

On my first visit to the spa I met an older woman who was selling healing plants in a park near the river Moravica. After we had a chance to get to know each other better, she revealed to me the secret that in addition to selling all kinds of healing teas, ointments and tonics, she also trades with sacred and magical plants. At our first meeting she gave me one piece of “Mother of Forest” plant and she told me that I should keep it as a lucky charm.



Jablanka showing Mother of Forest

After that I found out that she provides a small number of witches and occultist with plants for their rituals, and common people too, especially with plants that are lucky charms for various occasions. Also she revealed to me some secrets about the plants, the methods of how to collect them, preserve them and finally use them. In addition she told me several important myths about some of the plants, and explained to me why they are so important. Much of this data I have included in my book “Balkan Traditional Witchcraft”.

She is important to the local community as well, because she is a village woman and her knowledge is from old times. Because Herbal Lore is an important part of any Traditional Witchcraft path, I asked her to do an interview with me and she agreed to that. Her Name is Jablanka Milosavljevic.

The first thing that I was interested in was, why and how she decided to go out in public and “give” her services to people. She told me that two things were important there. She revealed to me that she had made that decision about 20 years ago because of two things. The first one was that she was sorry for the young girls from her village who were not able to get pregnant. Because she knew how to help them, she did so and revealed herself. After a short period she became “famous”.

The second reason was that after that she and her family moved to Sokobanja spa, and the spa is an ecological zone so they could not have any cattle or work with farming. So she decided to start by selling teas, ointments, and tonics etc. After a while some people approached her, asking her about sacred and magical plants, so she decided to start selling them, too.



Jablanka and her plants

While I was talking with her a group of teenage tourists from Iceland tried to explain to her in English that they wanted to buy some Cannabis from her. When she finally realized what they wanted she started to yell at them, and they went away from her.

That reminded me of another village herbalist, Ratka, who was a friend to my recently deceased grandmother. Villagers gave grandmother Ratka the nick-name “Monkey” because she was always in the forest, and she was very successful at climbing trees. Her house was by the central road of the village, and she grew some important plants in her yard. One of those plans was Cannabis. Somebody recognized what it was and called the police. In the end she had to go to court and got a sentence, one year in prison. Of course she was not in the same facility with murderess and hardcore criminals. When my grandmother asked her how it was, she told her that it had been great! She didn’t need to work, cook, wake up at 4am, and take care of cattle. Beside that everybody was very nice to her. So she had finally found some rest!

That is why Jablanka’s reaction was so strong. Cannabis is a very important plant in Serbian Craft tradition, and it is used for certain rituals as well as in some recipes for healing ointments, incenses and teas. But growing it is forbidden by law.

Back then, when I spoke with Jablanka, she had only three magical plants in her improvised stand.



Faeries Sieve (big flowers) and Raskovnik (Serbian mandrake)

The first one was “Mother of Forest” (eng. Toothwort, lat. *Lathraea Squamaria*), one of the most respected herbs. It represents the Forest Mother or the Goddess Herself. People believe that it protects them from evil, provides them with a good material situation, and if the owner is a woman, it protects her unborn child or helps a barren

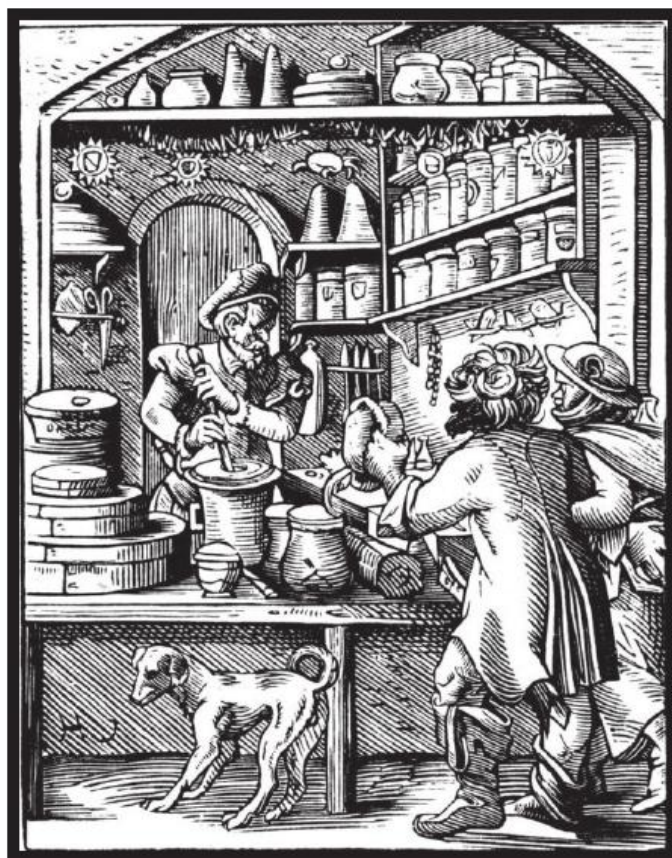
woman. Witches use that plant in their rituals as an summoning plant for Mother of Forest, in incense, charms or magical potions. Some physical diseases are also treated with this herb.

The second one was Raskovnik (lat. *laserpitium siler*, *siler trilobum*). It is said that this herb can open any lock, break chains, and even reveal where buried treasure is. Beside that it provides protection from evil magic, curses etc., and it can break any evil “chain” in people’s lives. It had anthropomorphic roots and “hair”. It is something like Mandrake in West European traditions. Some witches use it like “familiar”. If they pose its “body” (root in this case), its spirit-soul must serve them. The ones which have a more human-like shape can be very expensive.

The third one was Faeries Sieve (eng. Silver thistle, lat. *Carlina Acaulis*). People keep this flower in the house, so that the members of the household could have protection from all kinds of rumors about them, enemy attacks, and magic attacks as well. Beside that witches use that big flower as an altar to get in touch with the fairies.

Medical herbs on her stand are countless. Mainly they are mixtures of several plants which give cure for some disease. I could see many kinds of cures in the form of teas, ointments and tonics for all kind of tumors, hepatitis, hemorrhoids, asthma, diabetes, women’s problems(irregular periods, painful periods, infertility etc), as well as some psychological issues and many others.

Radomir Ristic



If Only...

by Mick Wragg

By ancient ways they gained the place
By crooked path and water worn hollow way
By ford and footpath and winding drovers track
A new dawn's promise
And sunrise's glad tidings lit, dazzling hue.

Where leys converged they gathered, breathing
A greener breath than we shall ever know
Cloaked in breezes free of hindrance
Proud and tall standing
And the place resounded with their presence.

We are the old ones, their pennants read
Should any been awake, been there, to see them
These hills are our breasts, those valleys the creases
Where our secrets lay
When life sprang ever renewed from them.

On hilltop green they formed their circle
Stamping, treading, round and round
As they did of old and shall forever
Where their stones stand
The giants dance some call it. Those who know.

By ancient arts they blessed the place
With censer, chalice, stick and stone
By murmured prayer and chanted rhythm
The beat of a small drum
That matched the throbbing of their hearts exactly.

We are the old ones, their seers said
Come again to this sacred place, this hilltop
This windswept scarp where rooks and ravens
Borrow the sharp edged wind
For moments long enough to swoop and seize ecstasy.

By ancient knowledge they healed the place
With Lore lost to all save a favoured few
Killed by ignorance, by unquestioning acceptance
Magic? It's not the truth is it?
When no man stood in opposition.

We are the old ones, they chanted together
Come again to this windswept place, our cloaks
Billowing, wallowing, huge as galleons sailing
Away where the eye cannot see
Nor the heart grieve for what was lost.

By ancients blest they hailed the sun
With arms upraised, with joyous shout
And the wind died, cowed by their power
Sighing to a standstill
Sluggishly through the grasses under their feet.

We are the old ones they roared together, their yells
Reverberating down the valley, rattling the trees
Echoing in our unconsciousness disturbingly, threateningly
Making us think, pause, worry
And wonder, what we might have been if only if only if only.....

© M.V. Wragg. Midsummer 2006.



In PRAISE OF THE LORD'S JOURNIES

Being a Funerary Song For the Living and Dying King

By R.J. Thompson

Verse 1: Let the Night never cease to calm you,
Let the Day never more be the same
Though you've gone where we can not find you
In our hearts we still sing you name.

Chorus: Oh Great Lord for you wander
And long may your name be sung
Through kingdoms of starlight
And Rays of the Sun

Oh Great Lord though you're hidden,
We're still guided by your light.
You're walking beside us,
A friend in the Night.

Verse 2: We were lost when the dark descended
And Winter gathered 'round us all,
You appeared with the sunlit morning
Through the light did the Summer come.

Chorus

Verse 3: Though you tread now the Underworld
Let the road lead you back onto us.
Let the Spiral draw you back to life
By your might shall you walk again.

Chorus

Verse 4: And amidst all of the darkness
We still celebrate this night
For within our hearts do we remember
Your return at the Yuletide.

Chorus

RITUAL healing in balkan craft

by Radomir Ristic

In this article we will try to explain a way in which everybody can perform a typical healing ritual using Balkan rules from its Witchcraft traditions. Healing rituals are the most common rituals from a large corpus of practical rites in Balkan Craft. There are many others (e.g. love, charm making, money making, defense etc.), all of which are pragmatic in nature, so witches use them to provide themselves or members of their community with a better quality of life.

There are many kinds of healing ritual, and several examples are published in my book "Balkan Traditional Witchcraft". For this occasion I will try to explain the basic structure of one of them, how to construct it, how to perform it and how to achieve a positive result with it.

The first thing that you must provide is a "Source of Power" for your ritual. The "Source of Power" will provide you with quantum of energy, which you will use as fuel for your work.

This "Source of Power" can be a lot of things. Sometimes it is a Cult object, sometimes witches use their own "will" and body energies in combination with the energy of location, relics, charms, stones, earth, stars, Sun or Moon etc.

In Balkan Craft, the "Source of Power" is usually a Cult object, which we can call "God" and "Goddess" even if they have obvious Christian names, but that is not essential. Sometimes they can be called Mother of Forest, Mara, Tsar, and King etc.

To work in contact with those Cult objects, according to the rules of some of those groups, you must be initiated or they must accept you at that moment, which can happen if your "heart" is pure as your intention and the field is filled with love towards the person who is ill.

The second thing that you must to do is to prepare for the ritual. For following ritual you will need:

One wax candle (no paraffin, no colored etc)

One gourd (we use a specific kind which has a handle, but if you do not possess one you can always use a clay or wooden dish - not a metal or plastic one)

incense (Church incense, not those from East)

One small bouquet of sweet basil which should be tied with red thread. (Sweet basil and red thread are symbols of good, good health, luck etc., and they both are considered to be a protection against evil, evil creatures and evil forces; they banish bad luck, evil and illness)

One witch's black-handled knife-“kustura” in Serbian.

One cup of water from a well, mountain river, or something similar. Water should be clean and intact-“virgin”. That means that no one should drink it or use for any other purpose.

Finally you need something personal from the person that you want to heal. Traditionally it is thread from the person's clothing. In Serbian terms that is “Beleg”. Nail, hair or photos are good too.

That is all.

After that you should wait for the “witch hour”, a period of time that begins after midnight. This is considered to be a time when the world of people and higher forces interact. In your dish you should add “virgin” water and thread “beleg”. With silence you should go out and put the dish on a table or something similar. Some perform this ritual nude but others just remove their upper clothing. Ritual nudity is very common in Balkan witchcraft and very often it is mandatory.

With black handled knife - kustura - you should “cut” the water three times in the shape of cross. That mean that you have just “opened” the water and that now it can be empowered with energy which carries your intention.

Then you should light candle and incense as an a offering to the “Source of Power”

After that, you should put your bouquet of sweet basil, which is tied with red thread, into the dish and start mixing water with it. Now you are making the whirl. While you're doing this you should intone following spell:

I call the stars and the Moon to be my witness in what I am doing

you expect additional energy from them too. Beside which, nature itself becomes your witness and the nature Gods and Goddesses too. When they know what you have done, everybody else knows that too. You need witnesses because they testify that the ritual has been done and that something happened.

I call st.John (“God”) and Maria (“Goddess”) to see what is happening to J Doe - Banish this illness from J Doe, far, far away!

Now you are calling the major forces, or sources of power, to see what happened, and you ask them to help you in your intention.

Banish illness to the neverland, where dogs don't bark, where roosters don't crow, and sheep don't bleat. Throw this Illness into the long hole, a deep river...let it count and never count...

This is what you want to happen to the illness. You're sending it to place from which it can never return, and where it can harm no one.

Let J Doe be like he was before, let him be good, positive and never ill. Thank you for this, saint John and Maria.

This is your closing words. In them you make your final statement and give thanks to the higher forces which will enable that J.D. become health again.

This spell should be repeated three, seven or nine times.

After that is done, some witches cross themselves three times and say AMEN. Do not be confused by that. Crossing is very old form of magic gesture but we do not have time for a full explanation of it, and word “amen” is very old too. It is the same thing as “aum”, “om”, “aumn”, “amn” etc. in various religions and magic traditions. In this case it’s considered to be the final “trigger” after which the spell is cast!

After all of that, you should put out the candle, leave the place of ritual in silence, without turning back, with the dish containing “virgin” water in your hands. This water is now considered to be empowered with healing energy. You should put it in a bottle and give to the sick person to drink a little of it and wash her face every morning for a week. That is the end of this authentic ritual from Balkan Craft.

It is important to know that St. John represents chthonic forces in Balkan Witchcraft, and that he is symbolized by the skull and crossbones. Maria is the Mother of Forest and his consort. Beside this, magic circle is very rare in Balkan Craft, and witches do not use it even when they work with supreme forces. Balkan craft is more shamanistic and you will not find anything which can remind you of ceremonial magic in it.

As you can see, everybody can perform this simple ritual for healing. The only thing that you should do is to change the names of “God” and “Goddess” from the Balkan tradition and add new ones from your own culture and tradition. If you are initiated in some tradition the whole thing will be simpler.

Radomir Ristic



In Search of Gwyddbwyll

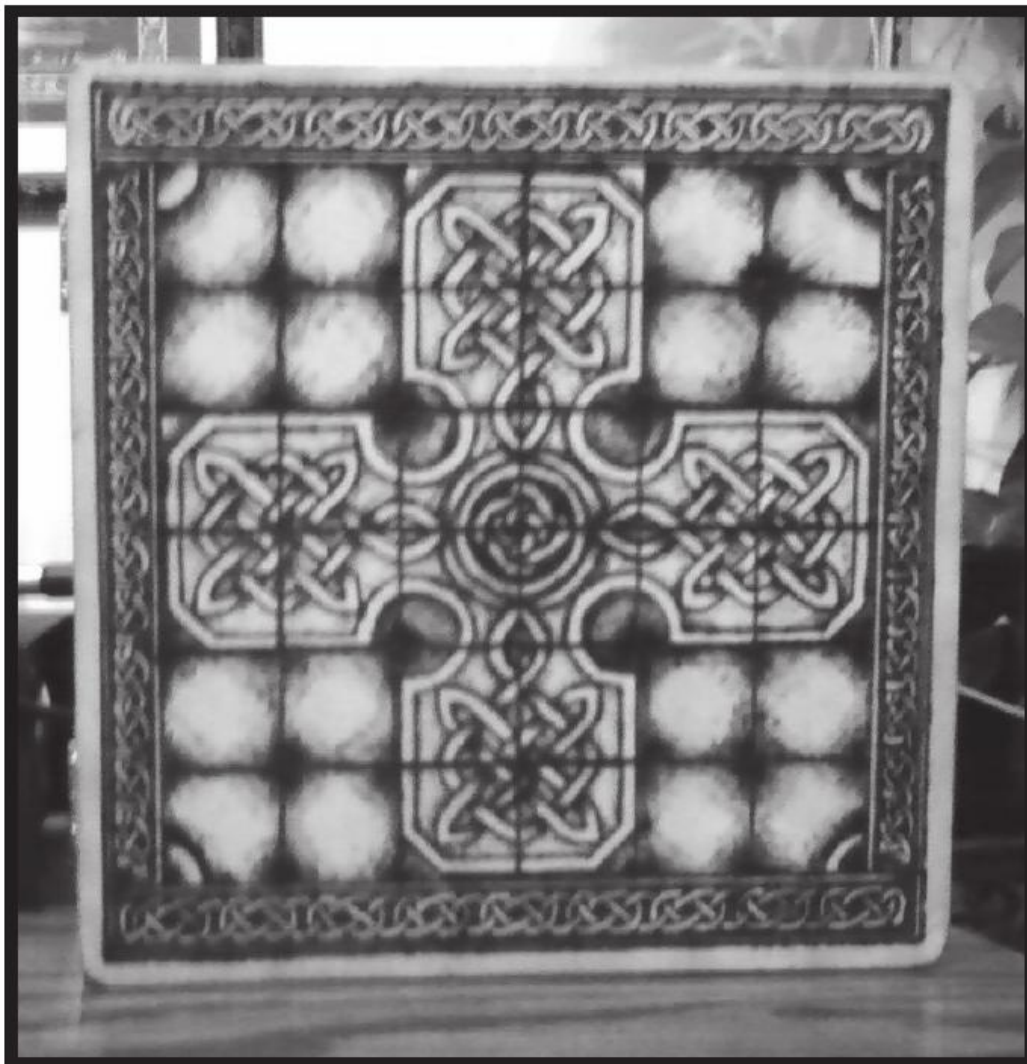
By Peter Paddon

And Arthur seated himself upon the mantle, with Owein son of Urien standing before him. “Owein” said Arthur, “wilt play gwyddbwyll?” “I will, my lord,” said Owein. And the red-headed servitor brought the gwyddbwyll to Arthur and Owein: gold pieces and a board of silver. And they began to play.

from ‘The Dream of Rhonabwy’ in the Mabinogion

Peredur came to the castle, and the castle gate was open. And when he reached the hall the door was open, and when he went inside he saw a gaming board in the hall, and either of the two sets of pieces was playing against the other, and the one to which he gave his help began to lose the game. And the other side gave a shout, just as if they had been men. Then he grew angry and took the set of pieces on his lap and threw the board in the lake.

‘The Magic Gaming Board’ author unknown, Welsh 12th century



Gwyddbwyll board, created by Peter Paddon (pyrography on wood)

Gwyddbwyll (gweeth-bweel) is a Welsh word that means “wood wisdom”. It refers to a chess-like game that was played in Wales, and this game is very similar to the Irish Fidchell game and the European Tafel games. For me personally – and for the others who walk the Path with me – it has a great deal of significance because, while little is written about it by contemporary authors, it is a game that appears to be important in the tales of Arthur and his knights from the Mabinogion and other sources of that era.

Very little is known about how it is played, though there have been some excellent “educated guesses” that seem to work very well. More important to those of us looking at it from an esoteric perspective, though, are the tales where the board plays itself and defines the outcome of a great battle, or where it is used for divination or other magical tasks. This side of its history, frankly, fascinated me, and so I set out to find what I could by a combination of research, inner contacts, and just plain playing the game.

With obvious connections to the modern game of chess, there are a few interesting facts that are known about Gwyddbwyll:

- Playing the game was restricted to Druids and the nobility
- A person’s nobility could be proven by their ability to play the game
- Boards were frequently made of gold or silver, and were prized possessions
- It was believed that the game could play itself

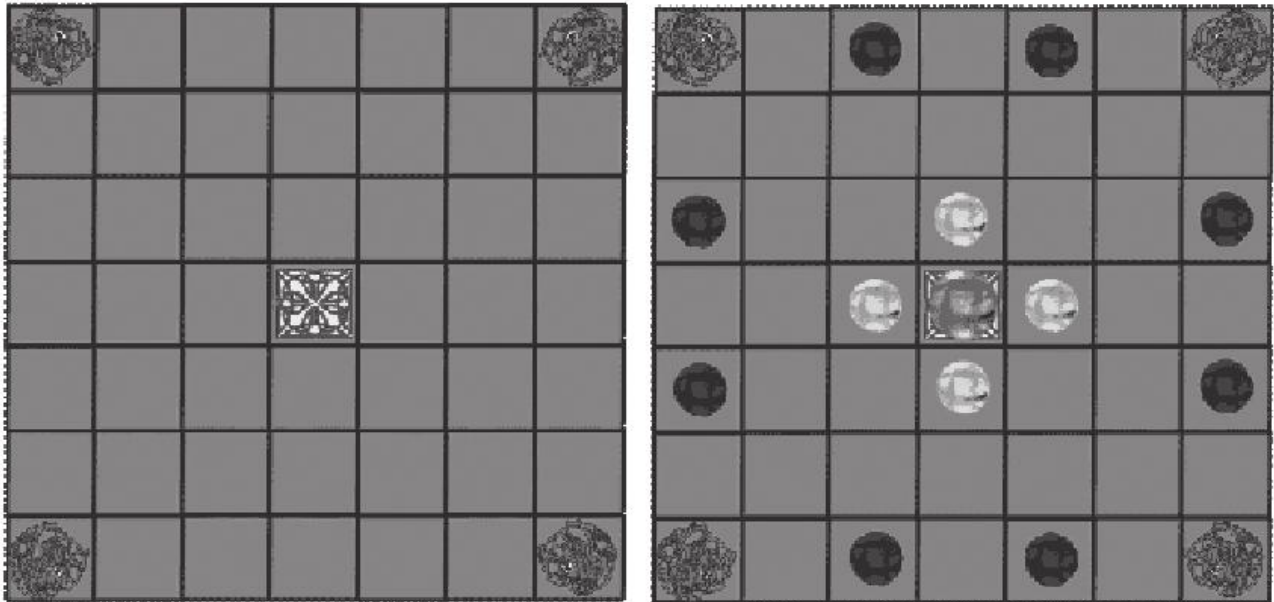
It is generally accepted by academics that the board was a chequered chess-style board, though there is a great difference of opinion on whether the pieces were played on the squares or on the lines between the squares. The usual grid from early examples is a 7x7 grid, but later versions went as large as 13x13. On one side you have a single King defended by four (in the 7x7 version) knights or princes, and on the other side are eight knights attempting to capture the King.

In Ireland, the Fidchell board was used for divination, which suggests that the squares or lines and the pieces have some sort of cosmological relationship to the world. The Mabinogion’s account of the game between Owain and Arthur shows it to be a magickal rite of some sort that affects the outcome of the battle going on around them. The fact that there are variants that involve the use of a quartered circle rather than the square chess-like formation lends itself to this idea. I intend to explore both formats, as I believe they were both used, for different purposes.

Modern versions of the game (there are a few attempts at reconstructing it by chess history enthusiasts, though no commercial versions that I have found) tend to ignore the occasional mention of dice being used, but this addition does lend some support for its divinatory use, and also offers a potential explanation why the Church repressed the game as much as it did - dice games were seen as games of chance, and therefore sinful. It is quite possible that if the throw of a pair of dice was used to dictate the movements in the game, it would provide a solution to the description of the game “playing itself”, along with a potentially magnificent form of divination.

At the moment I am just at the beginning of the process of exploring this fascinating game, but - not least because my Ancestors seem as excited about it as I am – I suspect that it will be a rich and rewarding voyage of discovery.

For those who are interested, here is a simple set of rules and a basic board to try out...



The illustration above shows an empty board, and on the right, a board with the pieces in their start position. The **King** is in the center, with the four defending **Princes** (but we'll call them Queens...) surrounding him. The attackers, or Knights, are laid out along the edge of the board.

All pieces move like the rook in chess, i.e. in straight lines vertically or horizontally without jumping any intervening pieces. Captures are not made as in chess, so the square moved to must also be vacant.

Only the king may occupy the center square (but there is no statement that other men may not cross over the center square if it is vacant.)

Play is by alternate moves, and who moves first is decided by the roll of a dice.

A man other than the king is captured and removed from the board when two of the opponent's men occupy adjacent squares in a straight line with it, i.e. if it is sandwiched between two opposing men.

The player with the king wins if the king reaches any corner square. The other player wins by "confi[n]g" him so that he has no power of moving." i.e., the king must be enclosed by four of the opponent's men occupying the adjacent squares, since the king is enclosed by his own men at the start of the game.

The Mother Nights Spiral: A Rite To be performed In Winter While The Sun Stands Still

By R.J. Thompson

What follows is the spiral walk performed within the Castle Tradition of Witchcraft during the tide of the Winter Solstice. It was initially inspired by a ritual performed within Waldorf Schools and taught to me by a wiccan coven that I had dealings with in the past. I have since adapted the symbolism to suit my own teachings and understanding of the twin spirals of existence. I will further explain my theories on the spirals of existence in a book that I am working on dealing with modern agrarian rites. I will also include the equivalent summer ritual in the book, which I hope to have completed sometime this winter.

A Compass Round or Ring of Art is not necessary to perform this rite. A spiral of evergreen boughs is created and should be connected, in some way, to the Underworld. This spiral may (and it is preferable) be lain on top of a spiral mad of stones. At the center of this stands a woman with a candle from which all other candles shall be lit.

Invocation of the Master:

Magister steps forward and rings the bell to the north:

Master

Lord of the World Below, I invoke you

I call you to bear witness to the Art,

Come to bear witness to the praise of you merry band,

It is the Sabbath!

Now is the time of the primal Misrule!

I call you to rise here, great Devil,

I call to you as a witch,

I call to you as a sorcerer calls,

Bound by oath and blood and mark to you.

Come hither, I call in your name!

Acknowledgment of Fate

Woman in the center of the Spiral says:

I come in the name of She that is All!

I stand between worlds!

I stand within the Castle the turns without motion,

Beyond the great River,

Beyond the Hedge,

In the Land of the Pale Folk!
I stand before Her throne!
I come before Holda,
She that rides upon the Goose,
And spreads snow across the Earth,
And know that I am but a strand of She.

Acknowledgment of Misrule

Summoner:

Now is the time of Misrule! Now is the end of the year! The time that reminds us, we are at in the wee hours of dawn, a time of primordial Misrule, before the birth of a new aeon! Now is the time of Chaos, a time between times, when the Sun stands still! No we are reminded of the time before times, when Chaos reigned, before the gods struck against the chaotic forces, oft called giants. Now is the time when the Lord of Misrule reigns, and know that in the past it was so! In the times before, when the Sun stood still, Misrule and Chaos ruled in the cities of men, and all was reversed, for the gates of life and death stand open at this time. The Wild Hunt rides the night skies, and spirits walk the earth! So do we honor Misrule, for we are between times, and He reminds us of the times that came before, and gives we of the shunned ways hope for the new aeon!

Treading the Spiral

Magister stands before the entrance of the Spiral:

In this time of Misrule, as the Sun stands still, we must guide those of spirit home to us, and show them the way back to the Underworld. So we gather here, before this crooked road, a Spiral which descends down and around and within, to the very depths of Hell! Within we shall find the Castle, and within, the Lady. Each shall bring forth the Need Fire from the Underworld to light the way home, for both Sun and spirit! Come forth, you who would call yourselves witch, come and bring light to the spirits that walk the cold dead Earth!

All congregants gather at the entrance to the Spiral. The Magister admits them, a few at a time to tread *widdershins* inward until they have reached the center. Each, in turn, will then light a candle given to them by the Mother in the center. She lights each candle and as the congregants tread outward, *deosil*, they will pick a spot at the edge of the Spiral to set the light down. While the Spiral is being tread, congregants on the outside may sing songs appropriate for such a rite. When all are finished the Magister enters and he followed by the Mother exit the Spiral in the same way, leaving their own candles.

The Magister Speaks:

It is done! Behold the Spiral is alight! The road home is clearly shown! Let the Sun return, and the dead with it! The time of Misrule will come to pass, and all will be as it should be.

The Mother Speaks:

Come now, and feast with us, in honor of those who have gone before, and those who now ride in the Wild Hunt, across the clear night sky!

A sacrament of wine and bread can here be performed in honor of those who ride the night skies, if it is so desire, or a plate can be set for them during a group feast, so long as the are acknowledged and given proper tribute.

URBAN WITCHCRAFT

by Radomir Ristic

Recently, I had the opportunity to follow a serious debate about Traditional Witchcraft and its relationship with nature. Many people were of the opinion that Traditional Witchcraft is some form of earth-based religion and that people from urban areas cannot practice it unless they go out into nature.

In that debate, two crucial subjects were raised. The first one was what Traditional Witchcraft is and how to define it. The second one was whether it can be practiced in urban areas. We do not have enough spaces to give a precise definition of Traditional Witchcraft, but we must say something about it in general, if we want to give some answers on this issue.

Traditional Witchcraft is not some form of separate and precisely-defined religion, or “Pagan” religion per se. Please, do not take this literally! Of course it has got some elements from “Paganism”, and yes it is very close to Pagan practices, but it is not the same.

Above all, Traditional Witchcraft is a magical system (like Hindu tantra) with specific Cult objects or god-like entities. However, these entities are not essential in order for it to be considered Witchcraft. In some Traditions, the system itself and the method of working are the most important things. But these Traditions work with higher forces and various energies as well.

In the English language, Witchcraft is defined as “sorcery”, which refers to any kind of procedure that can cause “something” in a mysterious way. This is not correct. The main differences between Witchcraft and Sorcery are that in Witchcraft there is some kind of initiation and deities or higher spirits. Sorcery is just a technique.

The nature of these higher entities, and the Witch’s relationship with them, shows us why Traditional Witchcraft is not a Pagan religion or any other religion per se. By definition from Webster’s dictionary, religion is:

- the service and worship of God or the supernatural.
- commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance.
- a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices...

Traditional witchcraft is different from all of that. In their systems, Witches are not just believers, servants, worshippers or people who are devoted to their faith. They use magic, they communicate with their higher entities, they know them personally, they see them etc... Usages of magic and magic rituals are forbidden in most religions, and they were forbidden even in Pagan times! But of course, Traditional Witchcraft does contain some of the elements which define religion. If you want to be Witch you can not be an atheist.

When we look at different traditions all over the Europe, we get a feeling that they are totally different, but that feeling could be wrong. Actually, when we observe them closer, we realize that all of them have a similar system and structure.

For instance most Traditions have two major deities, or Cult figures, although they can work with many "Gods" and "Goddesses" in addition to these. Some describe them as "God" and "Goddess" or Lord and Lady, or Father and Mother, or King and Queen, or Tsar and Empress etc. So in English traditions we can find Tubal Cain and Naamah, in Basquean Sugaar and Mari, in Serbian Tsar of the land and Mara, in Vlachian Tartor and Maria, in Romanian St. John and Mary or St. John and Dokia etc. The number of combinations are countless.

Some people can be confused with these characters and saints from Christianity, but that is Traditional Witchcraft. Of course, they are not interpreted in the Christian dogmatic manner.

When we "lose" these different names, we will realize that all these characters from all over the Europe are very similar. They all represent two faces, dark and light. A Lord and a Lady become very much the same person with different names. If we appraise them on general level and look at them through Hebrew mythology, they would become Samael (archangel, serpent or dragon) and Eve (as full moon and earth) and Lilith (as dark moon). Somewhere they would become the Dragon and a Lady, somewhere an Angel and a Lady, but in some traditions they would be recognized as the "Devil" and a Lady. Some Middle East traditions hide their names behind common nouns like Mother and Father. The original origins of all of these characters are much older than they seem at first reading, but that is another story.

In many traditions they are represented by the Sun and Moon. Their chthonic faces are symbolized by the Black Sun and Black Moon. In most cases, He is a giver of "awakening", common knowledge, magical knowledge, alchemy, blacksmithing, mills etc. She is a giver of secret knowledge too, she represents human destiny and fate. Also in many traditions She is recognized as the first spinner and weaver ...

As we can see, both of them do not have any special connection with nature itself. The Sun and the Moon can represent them, but that is not necessary and they are not Sun and the Moon in a literal sense. They just symbolize them, and that can be important for some rituals. Traditional Witchcraft is not an agrarian religion, and besides, the Sun and Moon are seen over the cities as well as country landscapes.

So, why is nature so important to some Witches? Well, most traditions have their origins in peasant societies, and their roots are deep in rural regions. Quite naturally, all of them have preserved some old folk customs from Pagan times from their own culture, but mainly those which have some kind of connection with their deities. So, those customs are not from pure peasant beliefs, and very often they do not represent any kind of nature-worship or seasonal festivals. Even the Sabbats in most real Traditions have nothing to do with seasonal celebrations, and they represent important points or events in the year, or even something completely different. We can find the worship of nature and celebrations of seasonal festivals in Wicca and Neo-paganism.

Beside that almost all traditions, as well as working with deities, also work with spirits of ancestors, angels, demons, saints, all kind of spirits, and of course faeries. The rules in most traditions let you work with deities in the city, in your own apartment or house. Also you can work with the spirits of ancestors there, although some traditionalists much prefer churches and graveyards for that kind of work. But you can find them in the city too. It is the same with working with angels, demons and saints. The only problem here is working with spirits of nature, and faeries. Some Witches have said that you need to be in nature if you want to work with them. In many traditions people do not work with them, or they just contact them for small favours. Others have a completely different viewpoint on them. In any case you can always leave the city for couple of days if you want to work with them. So, again there is no real problem.

Beside that, herbal lore is a major part of almost any tradition. But again that doesn't have to be a great problem. In today's world you can buy almost everything using the internet, or you can buy some seeds and grow them in you own apartment, if you would like to harvest them in a ritual way or by some traditional rules.

The main problem here is the usage of energies! Traditional Witches use many different types of energies. They usually use their own energies, Sun, Moon, Stars, and energy of places, energy from idols, charms and of course the Earth. The Earth energy can be very important in some rituals. In a combination of human and Earth energies (sometimes Fire too) Witches raise a cone of power that is important for many thing, like casting a spell or the manifestation of "God" or "Goddess". Many of them use special places in nature, which have "more" energy for that matter then other places.

But do not let that fool you. Those special places which are fully filled with more energy then the others exist in towns too. Some of these can be more powerful then those in the countryside. The main problem with those places in towns are that there are many more people living in towns, and you are at risk of being caught in action. Beside that, many of these rituals are performed at night, and some towns are not safe after dark. Imagine yourself in some dark alley in a big city, performing some ritual. It is very possible that somebody will see you. Who will scare who is another question. But with a little knowledge you will be able to gather enough energy in your own apartment, without leaving it on a quest for energy from powerful places. Always remember that energy is all around us.

As we can see, if you live in London, Paris, Amsterdam, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Los Angeles, or some other large city on our dear planet, you can relax . I presume that we all love nature very much, and enjoy being in it, but nature itself doesn't have much in common with Traditional Witchcraft per se. So anybody who wants can practice Witchcraft, if that is what he or she likes to do, no matter where they live.

Radomir Ristic



ENCOUNTERING ANCESTORS AT HOME AND AWAY

By Peter Paddon

Most people pretty much take it for granted that they can call on their Gods, their ancestors, and the mythic landscape that these entities inhabit, no matter where they are in the world. There are some Traditions that are bound to a specific location, such as the Gwyddon of Wales, whose practice is bound to the physical location of Wales by their role as stewards and guardians of specific sacred sites. But for everyone else, it is not unusual to find Buddhists in Central Park, Orthodox Jews in London, and Pagans pretty much everywhere. Most of the flavors of Witchcraft in the US originate in the British Isles or the Germanic regions, while the land here in the US was for thousands of years the home of the First Nations.

In several forums, discussions arose about the nature of the Sacred Landscape, especially for those of a Celtic, Saxon or Germanic persuasion who were practicing in lands far from their ancestors' traditional stomping grounds, such as America and Australia. So being a quizzical sort of chap who happened to be about to leave on a business trip that spanned six countries, three continents, crossed both the Equator and the International Date Line, I decided that nothing would answer the question as effectively as a practical experiment. So I set myself the task of attempting to connect with the Sacred Landscape of my Ancestors, and contact my Ancestors themselves, in each of the six locations. I did a podcast about this, where I broadcast recordings actually made as I did the experiments, but this article is my first real chance to ponder the results I obtained.

Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a territory located on China's south coast that was leased to the British and returned to China in 1997. With its mix of east and west, and greater freedom compared to the rest of China, it is a truly unique place.

Although this was my first visit to Hong Kong, I felt as if I already had ties here. Before I was born, the rest of my family lived here for three years, my father's final posting before leaving the army. In fact, one of my great pleasures on the trip was to visit the area – Kowloon (means "Nine Dragons") – where my family lived during that time.

As I made my attempt to connect to my Ancestors, I wasn't sure what to expect. To be sure, I had been making that connection from a foreign land – America – for over ten years now, but Hong Kong is the most foreign place I have ever visited to date. The curious mix of eastern and western culture, philosophy, architecture and other influences was made all the stranger by the little things that were decidedly British... double-decker busses, highway signs, the plugs on power cables, for example. The familiarity of these little things brought the strangeness of the whole into greater relief. On reaching within, I found that, not surprisingly, the presence of the local Ancestors was wholly Chinese, and it also buzzed and bustled with the same liveliness that I could feel in the mundane realm there.

Ultimately, I felt here that the guardians guarded, and the Ancestors watched, but not in a hostile or provocative way. They did not impede my efforts, just made themselves known to me in a cordial way.



Rio De Janeiro

Rio is a coastal city, the second largest in Brazil. Its name means “River of January”, and it was the capitol of Brazil when it was a Portuguese colony between 1763 and 1822. South of the Equator, it is a tropical city, and has perhaps the most diverse and integrated population you could ever encounter – there is no Brazilian “type”, as people of many cultures and ethnicities have settled there over the millennia, and you will find families of all ethnic types from Caucasian, through Hispanic and indigenous tribes, through to Asian and African people, all speaking only Brazilian Portuguese and having generations of their family living and dying in Rio. The city, like the country, is predominantly Catholic, though there is a sizeable percentage that is defined as “Spiritist”. Brazil boasts its own version of the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO) and Golden Dawn, along with a thriving Rosicrucian Order, and various practitioners of Shamanic or Witchcraft Traditions rooted in the indigenous population. I happened to meet and become friends with a Wiccan, who chose that path because all the practitioners of those other Traditions, to use her words, were in it for power, not for spirituality.

Reaching down within to connect to the One Land that exists beneath and within all local landscapes, I was very aware of the guardians and other entities of this geographical locations watching, alert but relaxed. It appears that the diversity and integration of the city is reflected in its spiritual landscape as well. I felt as if they were watching more out of

interest to see what I would do, than because of any perceived threat towards or from me. It was an interesting experience, and I certainly was able to find my Landscape and connect with my Ancestors as easily as I expected to.



London

London is an ancient city, founded two millennia ago as the Londinium of the Romans. Once considered the most cosmopolitan city in the world, it is still an important center of fashion, commerce, and culture, with a rich and fascinating history.

It may seem strange to talk about connecting to the Ancestors from within the UK when this article is about connecting in foreign lands, but after ten plus years of working and crafting in the US, it seemed only fair to make a comparison.

Last time I was in London, over three years ago, was my first visit since moving to the US in 1997, and the very first thing I noticed was how “loud” the Ancestors and the Landscape seemed to me. I guess that as I only learnt to make this sort of connection consciously after I moved across the ocean, it was my first experience of encountering the Ancestral spirits within the UK with all my senses tuned into that. They “clamored” for my attention, it seemed, and it was at that point that I realized about the whole “One Land” thing, because they told me I would be able to connect and work with them strongly in the US, and that they’d been trying to get my attention for years.

So it wasn’t so surprising that the “clamor” appeared to have been toned down for this visit. It was certainly easy to connect, without having to dig beneath the surface in the way I’ve

become used to. But the real difference – so they told me – is that now I am connected to them, and I am following the Path they intended me to, in the place I am supposed to be. In other words, they no longer had to yell at me to get across a very important message, and we could all afford to be a lot more relaxed about it.



Munich

The capitol city of Bavaria, Munich is the third largest city in Germany, and the place where Hitler started his rise to power with the Beer Hall Putsch. Home to the Holy Roman Emperors after Duke Louis IV was crowned King in 1314 and then Emperor in 1328, Munich is another city with a wealth of history, both mundane and esoteric.

While there, I visited the Frauenkirche, a church said to have been built by the Devil, who left his footprint in the floor of the church's entrance. I got to stand with my foot in that print, and a very interesting feeling it was.

I have always subscribed to the theory that the Germanic tribes were just an earlier wave of migrants from the Indo-European tribes that were the ancestors of the Celts, and as such, I was not surprised to find the Ancestors and Landscape here felt very familiar. I was able to make my connections with ease, with barely an acknowledgement from the local Ancestors. In all, no surprises and nothing particularly exciting to write about, either.



Rome

Rome has been the capitol city of Italy for two and a half thousand years, and is the most popular tourist destination in Europe. I have to admit, it is a beautiful city, with great food and wonderful people. Of particular interest, given the nature of my experiment, it is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, and home of the Pope.

I have to say that off all the locations, Rome surprised me the most, and not because of the Catholics, either. I expected to get some resistance from the Ancestors of this location, but it wasn't the Vatican that provided the resistance, it was the Pagan Roman Ancestors, who fought to keep the non-Roman deities out of the sacred area of the Seven Hills of Rome who seemed offended by my presence. They were extremely wary of what I was up to, and while they did not interfere, they watched closely, and I felt very uncomfortable crafting under their untrusting eye.

One of my former teachers used to talk about the Roman mindset as something that was diametrically opposed to the worldview of the Witch, and I have to agree. I honestly feel that whatever religion rose from this city would have regarded other faiths in the same way – it was Rome that created the oppressive ways that became the signature of the Christian Church. Perhaps if the Church had settled in some more laid back place, Christianity would have remained the Mystery Tradition that it started out as.



Madrid

I'm ashamed to say I never got around to trying my experiment in Madrid until I was sitting on the runway on board the plane that would take me home. Madrid, or what I saw of it, was clean, healthy and boring. I never made it to the heart of town, where all the interesting stuff is, and I never encountered the culture or the cuisine, and to be honest after three weeks on the road, I didn't really care.

But the Iberians were part of the proto-Celtic migration too, and sitting on the runway I found it just as easy as anywhere else to slip down and within, and connect with my Welsh ancestors. It was a brief, uneventful experiment, but nevertheless, it confirmed my other experiences that there is definitely a uniting Mythic Landscape that knows nothing of the arbitrary and artificial boundaries of country and state imposed by humanity, and by touching that unified "place" it is a simple step to reach a little more and encounter the familiar hills and valleys of your own Ancestors.



SPIRITS OF THE HOLLOW HILL – A STORY OF HEDGE-WITCHES by Eric De Vries

It had been almost a year now. Almost a year – it seemed way longer though. Not because time went by slowly, not at all, but because so much had happened. And now, she told me, it was time for me to meet the spirits face to face.

The woman who had been with me the entire year – her name is Haga – seemed threatening at first, dangerous almost. But over time, when you get used to her weird manner of speech, and her almost unnatural way of moving forward – apparently she walks, but her shoulders nor spine move even an inch, they're steady all the time, making it look like she floats just above the ground – then she is really nice, even funny at times. Unlike what the people in the village tell of her, she is not strange – relatively, considering the circumstances – rather she is marked by the spirit-world, which shows through in the dark light twinkling in her eyes.

She had taught me all about what it takes to be a 'witch' – I hope at least. "There is no way out now, boy", she said, "the spirits won't allow any foolishness or lying; they'll eat you if you betray them." (I think it's because of comments like this people think she's crazy/dangerous). She told me about the stang, how I can make it alive and ride it like a horse. How I should approach the spirits. But really, I don't think I'm ready – she seems sure, and I trust her, but I don't think I can.

I follow Haga up the hill. We don't have much hills around here and 'hill' is big word. Rather, I can better describe it as a pile of earth. "Long ago", she says, "our ancestors suffered a great loss. The three most important women, called the wise women or *witte wieven*, of this town died because of a fire. Some say it was lit by an evil man from the south who spoke a strange tongue, but none know for sure. The three women were sisters: they had lived, eaten and slept together their entire lives, and knew each other intimately, more intimately than husband and wife. But these were no ordinary women. They were witches, *hecce*, and knew how to conjure the spirits, find out the things unknown to all and bring sacrifices to the gods. Even, they could wake the dead and make them alive again for as long as one night. Some of the people considered them immortal – but I guess the south-man proved them wrong. Anyway, because they were burned in a certain way, the fire was lit at three different points and lit three different times, the way we burn demons, they were not able to join the ancestors in the hill of the gods. Their spirits still roam this hilltop."

"Ooh", I said sarcastically, not really impressed. "I think it is hard to believe that those women still live here." "So say many, but the truth is that they are not alive anymore. They've joined the raid of Dame Holda and the Furious Hunter, and act as their guardians now. No longer are their faces beautiful, nor even human. They've paled and are dressed in robes that are of the same pale colour as human bones. They're *alven* now, servants of the

Queen of Hell.” “Why do you tell me this?”, I asked (it is always good to ask a hexe what she actually means): “because I’ll introduce you to them, and if not, they’ll come to get you. If you meet them before the night starts, remember that you always have to speak in truth: not what it is in your head, but what is in your heart.”

On top of the hill stands a great, terribly old hawthorn. A wind blows through the branches, ripping of some old leaves, they drift on the wings of the wind-spirits into the meadows behind. We arrive at the hilltop and start unpacking the things we carried all the way up. A long, forked branch comes from my pack. It is called a stang, and is used as a tool of spirit-flight, Haga told me. Other things come from my pack as well: a crudely cut cup, used for containing fluids, a knife used for cutting symbols into the stang as well as other objects, and a girdle. This girdle was made by Haga and she said it would allow me to see my *daemon* and take its shape when I’d cross the fence. It is made of a strange wort, of which I don’t know the name, and is intertwined with pieces of fur, probably from a dog or wolf.

From Haga’s pack way less mysterious objects come: leaves from a weed growing at the side of almost every road – she called it “goose-wort” once – a small kettle and a bottle with some kind of drink, perhaps beer. Also she has a large silver plate and material to start a fire.

She sends me to get wood for the fire. I run off into the forest, happy I can get away from the chilling wind blowing over the hill. I wander a bit, picking and discarding fallen branches at will, not exactly eager to return. Then, suddenly, the trees clear and I can see into a fifteen feet wide, quite deep well. It is covered in a mist or vapour, which doesn’t allow me to see the edges of the banks. On the other side, a large stone rises from the water.

Then I am struck with terror. On the top of the stone sits an unnaturally small figure. It – I couldn’t determine whether it is a he or a she – was dressed in a dark green and black cloths and wore a broad-rimmed hat. Slowly I started to crawl back into the forest, but once I moved the creature called: “Who are you?” I did not answer. “Hey you! Over there! Answer me when I speak!” At first I hesitated, but did not think there was any harm in answering (the creature seemed so tiny, and it did not seem to carry any weapons). “I’m Rik”, “and how do they call you Rik?” I was completely puzzled by this question, and decided to simply blur out an answer, regardless of truth: “They call me strange. What is your name, and how do they call you?” The creature answered: “My name is hidden and only known to me and others of my kind. But they called me ‘child of wolf-skin’, ‘the masked servant’ and ‘soft-cat’. What is your business here, Rik the strange?” “My business here is hidden to me, but it has been said that the *tysja* are here to get me. And what is your business, soft-cat?” “My business is here, and known only to the covered.” “Then what does that mean, wolf-skin?” “My name is not wolf-skin: I am only his child. My folk dwell below the hill but my business is above their hall. But then, Rik the strange, I have one last question for you: what is your way and what is mine?” “Your way is that of wisdom, and suspect it to be mine.” “Well answered! I will let you walk this time, but next time we meet you will not

live.” “Then your prophecy is in error.” “My prophecy can not be in error, for I know all the fates of all men and my Mistress has told me all about yours.”

Then the creature disappeared into the mist, and I returned to the hilltop. On my way over there I picked up some wood – though I was still thinking about the conversation with the creature. Perhaps she was one of the spirits, the *tysja*?

When I reached the hilltop, Haga already had a fire running – “Late as always”, was the only comment she made – and a kettle hanging in it. She was busy carving the stang with symbols, of which she did not explain the meaning to me when I asked. She did explain something else to me though: “Tonight you will cross the boundary into the unknown and will be inducted into the rites of the hexe. There is, however, one thing you should know before you go there. Once you cross the fence and leap into out-world, there is no returning and your fate will be to die at the hands of the *tysja*. Your life will be different from everybody else’s, and there will be no returning. Are you sure?” “I don’t know”, I said. “Good, people who know for sure don’t know what they’re up against. There is no certainty when it comes to the *alven*.” She took the kettle of the fire and threw the leaves in it, and when it had cooled down she took the bottle she brought with her and mixed it with the contents of the kettle. She mumbled some words above it, but I couldn’t make any sense out of it.

The sun was about to set, and Haga said we needed to hurry. She took the plate she had brought and the knife from my pack. She told me to hold my hand above the plate and in one flash she cut me in the arm. “Aaah! What the hell are you doing?” “The spirits don’t come out of themselves you know, the dead don’t walk the earth because they’re restless, the clouds do not move because my songs make them happy, the birds do not follow me because I’m such a nice person. All these things happen because sacrifice is made, because they’re bound to me like children to their mother, because they’re bound by blood.” She poured a bit of fluid from the kettle onto the plate and held it up to the sky:

*Elves, daemons and other troll-folk, come and hear my words:
Since the old days we’ve been tied together,
Blood to blood, word to word,
Now I ask you: bring this young man to the underworld,
And let him grasp the secrets!*

*Elves, daemons and other troll-folk, come and hear my words:
I know your names, I know your halls,
At supper we dined together, let us remember our oaths,
And take this young man into your midst,
Initiate him into your company, and teach him the secrets.*

*Elves, daemons and troll-folk, come and hear my words:
Here is your food, here is the meal hallowed by blood,
Here is the life-force, given in good will,*

*But what is given is truly taken,
And what is taken is truly given!
Teach him the secrets!*

It's pretty strange to hear a woman sing such a song somewhere on a hilltop. From a quarter mile away she would seem crazy (perhaps she is, I don't know) but when you stand besides her, there is no way to escape the feeling that there **is** something out there, running, rushing towards that hawthorn on the hill.

She pours the contents of the plate onto the ground; "They're here. Can't you see them?" "I see just trees, grass and that hawthorn." "Ha!", she laughs, "Just trees? Just grass? Just a hawthorn? Ha! You do not know the spirits like I do! Can't you hear the trees moving? The grass being pressed down by invisible feet? Can't you see the light shining from the hawthorn, while the sun is down? Ha! No spirits, what nonsense!"

"But now you'll have to go without me. The spirits will not allow me to help you inside the hollow hill. Listen carefully, take this", she gives me the kettle, "and drink from it. It is blessed by the beautiful Lady and its spirit will take you down. Now go the hawthorn and lay yourself under it. If you feel the urge to sleep, give into it. If you feel the urge to walk away from it, don't – it are the spirits testing your determination."

I did as I was told. I emptied half the kettle (it wasn't a big one) and with a bit too much fluid in my stomach climbed further up the hill. The hawthorn radiated a strong presence of darkness, terror and dread. However, I did as Haga told me and lay myself under the hawthorn. Night came and I watched the stars through the roof of hawthorn leaves. Slowly but steadily I sunk away, the soothing wind and presence of the stars above my in the sky comforted me and eventually I drifted off into a twilight sleep.

I expected to simply wake up, and I did but when I lifted myself from the ground, I knew there was something essentially different. After I had walked a few paces around the hawthorn I noticed the dreading difference: my body was still asleep, and was still lying there on the ground. At my head stood (that is, my head lying on the ground) the same *tysja* I had met at the forest-well. "We meet again", it said, "my Queen has sent for you. I'm here to take you to the women of this hill." "And how will you take me?" The creature simply smiled, though of course in that strange way all the *tysja* do. It knocked three times on the hawthorn, and the mound opened up below us and we fell down into the earth.

The fall was a short one, not more than five feet, but we, or at least I, still landed hard – since the ground was not earth, but stone. It was a dark, misty place which smelled a bit to rotten than normally considered healthy. The tunnel we were in led down steeply into the hill. "Come on. Let's move", the creature said and pointed at the dark end of the tunnel. We walked for hours, it seemed. It was all a bit strange, because we walked for hours, which probably led us to the core of the earth, or at the least very near to the core. However, the more I thought about it, the less I understood the whole experience, and less willing I was to think about it.

Suddenly the tunnel widened, and a great hall appeared out of nowhere. In the middle of that hall stood a statue, or at least it looked like a statue, of a large troll-like creature with a dog at its side. "Ssst!", my personal creature said, though I didn't make any noise at all, "this is the guardian of the door. He will not let you pass unless you outwit him. Don't try anything clever on him, 'right? He doesn't really like the human notion of 'intelligence'. Just try to answer his questions in truth."

Once I approached the statue-seeming creature, it started to move and come to life. "What is your name? And what is your business here?", he asked. For a moment I was distracted by the vicious-seeming dog which growled at me, but then I answered: "My name is Rik the strange, and my business is that of the hill." "Who do you bring with you?" "My companion on this journey is the child of wolf-skin and has been called soft-cat. We would like to continue our journey along this road." "None can pass, since I'm superior in wisdom and knowledge to you, mortal destined to die. Unless you prove me wrong, you will not pass nor make it back to midgard:

"What is it that resides inside this mound."

"In truth, there is nothing that resides in this mound that does not dwell any where else."
"Then from what roots does the hawthorn spring."

"In truth, the hawthorn is no tree, for its roots lie at the core of the earth and its branches in heaven"

"It is better to sacrifice your companion to the jaws of this dog, Gramr, than to be eaten by the giants themselves."

"In truth, you speak lies, for if I sacrifice my companion, my life will be lifeless, my fears fearless, and my wisdom in error."

"You speak truth, Rik the strange, you and your companion can pass."

We continued into the tunnel, descending deeper and deeper into the hill. Finally, we stopped for a moment, because my companion wanted to say something: "What is it Rik, that brings you down here?" "I don't know: it is jus the way it is." "Then why do walk these hellish miles down into the earth." "Because it is the only road open for me. For, in truth, there is nothing else for me find than the mysteries inside the earth." "You know you won't make it out of here alive?" "Yes, I known, but everything is at it should be. 'Down, all of us must go there one day' is what Haga taught me. And I guess she's right, as always."

We continued our journey and eventually entered a second, great hall. There three sisters were sitting, all three of them dressed in white, which had the colour of a dead man's skin. They were spinning. In the middle stood a great cauldron. "Why are they spinning?", I asked my companion, it replied: "It is their fate, they will have to spin until the end of the world and once the doom of the gods is there, they will spin a new one out of the fibres of

the old one.”

“Who have you brought to us, soft-cat?” I stepped forward, saying: “Rik, Rik the strange.” “Ah, I see.” I had thought of this moment as exciting, dreading, fearful but it was none of that. I simply stood there, feeling naked because of the chilling wind which seemed to blow through my clothes as if there weren’t any.

Suddenly, a shrieking voice screamed, it was a high, deadening tone and I knew what it meant: it was the call of the wild hunt. Great host of spirits ran into the hall, wildly screaming, shouting in furious ecstasy. It was an unbelievable view, the dark clothes, the bloody blades, the bone-bare horses and the pitch-black eyes of the pale riders. A great man with a club stepped forward, he said his name, but all I could hear was screaming fury. He grabbed me, and threw me into the middle of the furious host and with their swords, clubs and whatever they had on them, they beat me. First they watched the blood run from my veins, and secondly they crunched my brain, cut my organs into pieces. Thirdly, they crushed my bones so many times until it was nothing but powder. I had no idea what was going on, but the fear, the dread was immense.

And then it all stopped, it did not matter any more, because I had not lost consciousness, even though I knew there was nothing left of my body. I was a spectre, a spirit without physical form, but I was very much alive. I had visions of large green meadows and great halls in which large groups of people sat together in brotherhood. Some of them I recognized as my dead uncle and grandmother, others, I knew, had to be family because the typical noses and slightly curved eyebrows, the sea-blue eyes and thick, brown, slightly curled hair – all characteristics of my family.

A great tree shake and I saw people being slaughtered, the rivers of the earth completely red because of the blood. Bodies, trees, houses, all was consumed by it. But new families were raised, new houses build and new flames tamed. Everything was anew, and I could see three ladies, spinning as ever.

Suddenly I was back into the hall. I noticed I was floating in water, and three hoods were bending over me, and I said: “Shouldn’t you be spinning?” “Not now”, they answered. I could feel my legs again, my arms, my head, my chest, my stomach, everything. It felt as an enormous joy to know I was alive again. But underneath, I still felt the sadness of the shaking tree, and the mystery I found in the visions I had.

The three woman helped me out of the water, and I noticed I was lying in the cauldron in the middle of the hall where I was killed. My companion smiled at me, with that strange twinkling in its eye, “See, Rik the strange, see!” But I did not see, I knew that everything was different and yet familiarly the same. Not the world had changed, I had.

lads fate

by Kristine K.

In her womb, we grow, see and live in a web which is Fate

Beginnings

Through every lifetime, a journey is what we must create.

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We search for a meaning to what we must truly live to be

Life

Finding a life of wisdom and true magic can never be too easy.

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Crowds of others who say they are the same, dance to a drum

Longing

A oneness with the moment makes you feel total freedom.

~~~~~

A closer look into this tangled web in which we all live

Reality

The Elders scream for you to hear that you are a true native.

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You look inward to see that you are all and all is you

Endings

Looking out with new eyes, what you must see is finally true.

Biblical References in Traditional Witchcraft

By Peter Paddon

There has been a lot of discussion recently about the various Paths or Traditions of Witchcraft, and it has been noted more than once that certain Traditions seem to carry a lot of Biblical Lore within them. For those who grew up in – and escaped – repressive Christian communities, that can be very awkward, as they tend to reject anything Christian.

So why are there Traditions with material of apparently Biblical origin, and is this a good thing or a bad thing? Let's start by examining some of the better known examples. But first, some history.

By the 11th Century, Pagan and Craft practice in Britain was in a pickle, by all accounts. The more or less enforced conversion to Christianity had been going on for some 600 years, and While a great deal of the old Lore was preserved, however imperfectly, by the monks who wrote down the stories from the oral Traditions, the dangers of being openly Pagan caused families to draw themselves in, and keep what they had within the safer boundaries defined by blood relation. This both preserved a measure of Tradition, and spelled its doom. Without interaction with other Traditions, if a family lost someone unexpectedly (a common occurrence in that age), they frequently lost a portion of their Lore too. So there were Traditions that became fragmentary, and families that didn't so much follow a Tradition as they had quaint family traditions followed with little or no understanding.

Ironically, it was the Knights' Crusades that changed all of this, at least for some families. Knights from families with enough of their Tradition left to be considered actively pursuing the Mysteries found themselves in Palestine, among a people with a rich esoteric heritage of their own. Though it was a different culture, and different Paths, they saw things that resonated with the fragments they knew from their family, and they gathered up whatever they could get their hands on, and took it home with them. This latter point is generally accepted by academics who study such things, though the earlier part is, I admit, speculative, and based more on tales I have heard than cold hard evidence. But it fits...

The pieces of Palestinian Lore, whether they were from Jewish, Islamic, Sufi or other sources, were used to fill the gaps for these families, and as they were already masquerading as good church-going folk, it was not a real stretch to add these elements to their Lore and practice. As time went on, this Lore got integrated, and the likes of Tubal Cain, Lilith, the Watchers, and even the Devil became staples of those Tradition, until finally in modern time, we find Traditions such as Cultus Sabbati, The Clan of Tubal Cain, and various Luciferian Traditions that are either built on the remnants of these Family Traditions or are recreations of what went before.

This poses a dilemma for the modern Crafter who sees any apparently Christian influence

as inherently bad, mainly because the assumption is usually that the material is of Biblical origin, just because it is mentioned in the Bible. I was recently involved in a passionate discussion on this subject where someone who I respect deeply commented that , okay, the material is older than the Bible, but why would you drink from a tainted well like the Bible and the Church when you could go to purer sources? Ironically, while many of these topics do get a mention in the Bible, few if any are discussed in any depth or detail, and it only takes a moment to realize that the source material the Knights brought back was not likely to be of Christian origin. In fact, even though it is likely that the Biblical references were used to educate members of the family, it is equally likely that older sources, as they became available, would have been devoured by the practitioners. You only have to look at the voracious appetite many modern Crafters have for seeking out sources for Lore to understand that as the Babylonian, Sumerian, Akkadian and other material became freely available, the Crafters who were used to encountering Tubal Cain, Lilith and the Watchers would be reading up on the tales of the Annunaki. In a sense, the mentions in the Bible almost end up as a blind to the true origins of this Lore. So let's have a closer look at the Craft understanding of this body of Lore.

Tubal Cain

A descendant of Cain – who was himself the son of Adam and Lilith by some accounts – Old Tubal was familiar to many in British society long before Robert Cochrane and the Clan of Tubal Cain. He was the Master artificer in Freemasonry and the subject of that well-known poem by Kipling:

Jubal sang of the Wrath of God
And the curse of thistle and thorn--
But Tubal got him a pointed rod,
And scrabbled the earth for corn.
Old--old as that early mould,
Young as the sprouting grain--
Yearly green is the strife between
Jubal and Tubal Cain!

Jubal sang of the new-found sea,
And the love that its waves divide--
But Tubal hollowed a fallen tree
And passed to the further side.
Black-black as the hurricane-wrack,
Salt as the under-main-
Bitter and cold is the hate they hold--
Jubal and Tubal Cain!

Jubal sang of the golden years
When wars and wounds shall cease--
But Tubal fashioned the hand-flung spears
And showed his neighbours peace

New--new as Nine-point-Two
Older than Lamech's slain--
Roaring and loud is the feud avowed
Twix" Jubal and Tubal Cain!

Jubal sang of the cliffs that bar
And the peaks that none may crown--
But Tubal clambered by jut and scar
And there he builded a town.
High-high as the snowsheds lie,
Low as the culverts drain--
Wherever they be they can never agree--
Jubal and Tubal Cain!

Rudyard Kipling

Originally a worker of bronze, brass and gold, Tubal Cain became the archetypical blacksmith, along the lines of the British Wayland, the Roman Vulcan or the Greek Hephestias. The Coal-Black God is often equated with the Horned Master of Saxon British Witchcraft.

Lilith

According to Rabbinical lore, Lilith was Adam's first wife, kicked out of the Garden of Eden when Adam complained to God that she wanted to be on top! Adam's loos, is my personal opinion, but according to the Rabbis, God punished Lilith to spend eternity giving birth to a thousand babies every night, half of whom would die before dawn. Thus in Christian and Jewish Lore she became the Mother of Demons, and an incubus herself, preying on men for their "nocturnal emissions". In a religion where "wet-dreams" are a sin, it is nice to have a demoness to blame for those suspicious stains.

Interestingly, the modern feminist movement has embraced Lilith as an archetype of the strong, independent woman, which has given rise to the Lilith Fair. She also appears as an archetype in Jungian psychology, in a similar vein, and even women in some varieties of Judaism have embraced her as their champion.

In Sumerian Lore she is described as the "Gladdener of All Hearts", and is said to live in the middle of the World Tree, with the Zuzu bird nesting in the branches above and the dragon nesting in the roots below. She is described as "the Maiden who has stolen the Light", but another version of the same text uses the phrase "the Maiden who has seized the Light", and identifies her with the Moon. Translations of Sumerian texts call her Maiden or Demon largely based on when the translation was made.

Neo-Pagans have embraced Lilith in much the same way – and form – as the Feminist movement, but for grizzled old Crafters she is worked with as a form of the Dark Mother or Black Goddess. She is often seen as the Consort of Samael, originally depicted as an androgenous conjoined pair that were the complement and opposite of Adam and Eve.

Witch-Lore that embraces Lilith make much of her identity as the Mother of Cain, seeing in him the semi-divine hero, much like Hercules, and the Mark of Cain is considered to be the Witch Mark, by which we identify each other. Commonly depicted as the circle-cross, the actual mark's form is, naturally, an oathbound matter, but it is safe to say that while it can be physically represented on the body of the Witch, the real Mark is imprinted on their spirit and can be detected in their aura.

Samael

Aside from being Lilith's consort, Samael is often a primary figure in the Lore of witchcraft Traditions that use Lore connected with Biblical sources. Described as an archangel who has the task of being the Accuser, he is said to be the original version of Satan in Abrahamic Lore, though in Craft Lore he is quite a different figure. He originates (textually) in the Babylonian Book of Giants. He is often depicted as a great serpent or Dragon, and can be paired in some Traditions with Azazel as his rider. He is considered to be a leader of the Watchers, the Annunaki of Sumerian Lore, and some scholars equate Samael and Azazel to Enlil and Enki, the Twin Gods of the Akkadians, whose tale has similarities to that of Horus and Set in Egypt.

Samael and the Watchers are said to be responsible for the creation of the Faerie races, elves, dwarves, gnomes, and the Fair Folk themselves.

Annunaki

These were a group of Sumerian or Akkadian deities, frequently equated to the Watchers, or Fallen Angels. Depending on how it is written, the name Annunaki means "of Royal Blood", "princely offspring" or "heaven and earth". They are the children of Anu and Ki, and were led by the twins Enlil (Lord of the Wind or Air) and Enki (Lord of Earth), who disputed each other's right to lead. Enki created humanity to be servants who would do the tasks the Gods would not lower themselves to do for themselves, but Enlil believed that humans deserved a better fate than that, and caused Adam, the first man, to mate with Lilith, Enki's daughter, to introduce the Divine bloodline into humanity. This eventually became what is considered the Witchblood, also the bloodline of the Frankish Dragon Kings, a dynasty of Sacred Kings that were relaced by the Catholic Church using the forged document of authority they said was given to them by Constantine, himself of that Sacred Line.

Needless to say, the concept of Witchblood is very important to Traditions that embrace these myths, and this can be an additional bone of contention for those that do not. Some Traditions hold to the idea that only some humans carry the Witchblood, but the more pragmatic realize that with the number of generations that have existed on Earth, pretty much everyone would have some of the Witchblood in their make-up. So they instead focus on the concept of Awakening... we all have Witchblood within us, but in order for us to become Witches, that blood must be awakened, after which progress is not so much a matter of learning but remembering by tapping into Ancestral memories.

So the answer to that question about why Crafters would use Biblical material when

they can access purer sources is simple. They do access purer sources, but that does not magickally make the Biblical references disappear. After hundreds of years, the Lore brought back by the Crusaders and practiced by their families – and then rescued, resussitated or reconstructed by modern Crafters - is part of the British Witchcraft body of Lore. Nobody says that all Crafter have to sign up and swallow it whole, but for those who do include it in their Tradition, it is an honorable part of their heritage, practiced and studied in the context of its original occurrence, without any of the dogma or stigma attached to its Biblical counterpart.

Someone said that perhapd the Biblical stuff was retained as a blind, to make them look more acceptable to the mainstream if discovered. But I think it is a double blind, because that “Biblical” Lore has a pure pedigree, and is the Lore of the Witchfather, Old Hornie, the Horned Master, hidden in plain sight.



